

## COSHH Essentials

### – how to keep safe when working with hazardous chemicals

Hazardous chemicals can harm their user's health through dusts, gases, or fumes that you breath in, or via liquids, gels or powders that can come into contact with your eyes or skin. There is even the potential for microorganisms to gain entry to the body causing infection or allergic reaction.

#### Hazards

Hazardous substances can create a range of health hazards, and these can include but are not limited to:

- Asthma
- Respiratory irritation
- Skin sensitisation
- Cancers
- Reproductive health hazards
- Burns

Some of the effects can be immediate for example dizziness or shortness of breath other can take many years to develop. Many of the Chronic effects cannot be cured once developed.

#### Protection

There are a range of actions you and your employer can take to keep you safe when working with hazardous substances, if you are unsure about any of the procedures developed by your employer make sure you stop and ask!

Your employer can help to protect you and your colleagues against the effect of hazardous substances by:

- Evaluating what the health hazards are.
- Undertaking a risk assessment (COSHH Assessment).
- Implementing control measures to reduce harm to health and maintaining them.
- Providing information, training, and supervision to users.



- Ensuring procedures and control measures are followed.
- Monitoring users' health when required.
- Planning for emergencies.

#### You can help protect yourself by:

- Following your organisations procedures relating to hazardous substances.
- Ensuring you fully understand the COSHH Assessment including PPE and emergency requirements.
- Wear the correct PPE and always abide by control measures.
- Only use and store materials in line with your training and in line with the COSHH Assessment.
- Reporting any issues to your employer promptly.
- If you are unsure stop and seek advice!

These lists are not exhaustive but provide an insight into how users of hazardous substances can be kept safe.

